

Ocean Friendly Gardens Yard Sign Criteria

An Ocean Friendly Garden (OFG) is a garden that applies CPR - Conservation, Permeability, and Retention - to revive the health of our watersheds and oceans



Conserving the use of water, fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides reduces the amount of pollutants and water running off a landscape and dramatically helps restore and protect our local waterways and the ocean. Removing turf grass areas as much as possible, and replacing them with native plants or other climate-adapted choices establishes habitat for many species and makes the garden "come alive." Finally, the proper selection of plants and design reduces maintenance and eliminates the need for equipment that contributes to air pollution.

Permeability within a landscape allows it to hold more of its water and nutrients. This mixture of water and nutrients is healthy in a garden but can accumulate and deplete oxygen in our streams and ocean - killing precious marine life. Permeable walkways and other permeable "hardscape" as well as "living soil" greatly improve a garden's permeability.

Retaining rainwater in your garden mimics natural processes. Retention/infiltration areas help restore a garden's natural water resource and replenish groundwater aquifers, which directly benefits the communities that rely on groundwater. These devices are important at capturing the first inch of rainfall after a dry spell - the event called "First Flush" that carries the most pollutants to our ocean. Approximately 600 gallons of water is generated per inch of rain per 1,000 sq. ft. of impermeable surface. The steps of rainwater retention are to take water otherwise running off your property and: "slow it, spread it and sink it."

An OFG Sign will be awarded to any garden that achieves the following criteria:

CONSERVATION

Turf Areas

1. Climate-appropriate turf grass is limited to 20% of total square footage of the landscaped area.
 - A. Turf grass is limited to only those areas where it serves a specific purpose (documented play area).
 - B. Turf grass is maintained organically without synthetic fertilizers and never over-watered.
 - C. Turf grass is kept away from the perimeter of the garden, where irrigation overspray is hard to control.
2. Cool season turf grass is not present in front yard gardens in areas receiving less than an average 44 inches of annual rainfall.
3. Warm season turf grass, if present, is not over-seeded with cool season grass during winter months.

Irrigation

1. No automatic irrigation is utilized OR
2. Irrigation system is in good repair (no breaks or leaks) with no visible signs from stains on nearby hard surfaces or erosion on vegetated surfaces from repeated overspray or runoff. ([See maintenance details below](#))
3. No spray irrigation of any kind is installed in areas less than 10 feet wide OR a total surface area of less than 100 square feet.
4. Drip irrigation is ½ inch diameter tubing or larger -- utilizing either line source ("in-line") OR point source emitters ("on line").
 - A. No 1/4" diameter irrigation tubing is present, except where needed for irrigating containers and raised beds. ([See irrigation details below](#))
5. Hoses have shut-off attachments.
6. A weather-based irrigation controller (WBIC) or "smart" irrigation controller is installed OR
7. Absent a WBIC, the irrigation controller has a rain shut-off installed.

Mulch

1. A minimum of 2 inches to 4 inches of natural woodchip mulch is present in all planted and open areas.
2. 50% or more of the woodchip mulch must be smaller than 1 inch in length or diameter.
3. Small open mulch-free areas are permitted if they are designated for native bee or insect habitat.

Plants

1. Plants are grouped according to plant community or hydrozones including:
 - A. Similar sunlight exposure, water requirements, root depth, soil type, hardiness and temperature adaptation, and/or size at maturity.
2. New gardens are planted with sufficient space between plants to accommodate mature growth without over-crowding, and to minimize pruning at maturity.
3. Plants requiring regular shearing are not permitted, unless they are edible or produce edible fruit.
4. Plant material is 80% climate-appropriate unless it is edible or produces edible fruit. (Climate-appropriate plant material is defined as plant material with a Species Factor or Crop Co-efficient of 50% or less or is described by reliable local references as a "medium" water-using plant in the particular climate. In California, use www.water.ca.gov/wateruseefficiency/docs/ for Species Factors.)
5. Local native plant material is utilized for at least 10% of the visible garden area, whether or not the other plant material is edible or produces edible fruit.
6. No invasive species are present. Invasive species are defined as those listed on the local Invasive Plant Council website as invasive or on the "watch list". (General information at: <http://plants.usda.gov/java/noxiousDriver>, and in California <http://www.cal-ipc.org>.)

Water Features

1. Water features may improve the habitat attractiveness of the garden and are allowed within these guidelines:
 - A. Water is recycled by the water feature.
 - B. Open water features are covered at least 50% by vegetation,
 - C. All water features are maintained without chemicals or additives that are toxic to fish.
 - D. Overflow from the water feature drains into a vegetated area.
2. Swimming pools and chemically treated water bodies are drained to sewer systems.
3. Swimming pools must be covered to minimize evaporation when not in use.

PERMEABILITY

Healthy Living Soil

1. Soil health is maintained organically without chemical additives.
2. Soil health is maintained by the addition of compost, compost tea, and worm castings.
3. Soil is not visible beneath a mulch layer, EXCEPT
 - A. Areas 4 inches to 12 inches around the crown of woody plants should remain un-mulched, and
 - B. Areas 12 inches to 60 inches around the trunks of trees should remain un-mulched.
 - C. These un-mulched areas should be minimized, but depend upon the size of the tree or plant crown.

Permeable Hardscape

1. Walkways and patios are made permeable with
 - A. Plants, mulch or decomposed granite in gaps between pavers or other hard surfaces; OR
 - B. Construction materials that permit water to "flow-through" -- such as permeable concrete or asphalt.
2. Impermeable surfaces or minimally permeable surfaces, such as permeable pavers or decomposed granite, are graded to direct excess surface flow of water into adjacent vegetated areas.
3. Existing impermeable surfaces such as driveways or large patio areas have been altered to direct surface flow of water into adjacent vegetated areas or retention/detention devices.

RETENTION

Downspout Re-direct

1. If gutters are installed, all visible downspouts are directed away from impermeable surfaces into vegetated areas, mulched areas or retention/detention devices.
 - A. Rain chains and other devices to slow the fall of water are recommended as a replacement for downspouts.
2. If gutters are not installed, surfaces beneath the roof eaves are EITHER
 - A. Vegetated with hearty plants that can withstand the beating; OR
 - B. Covered with mulch, gravel or other sturdy and permeable materials, AND
 - C. Hardscape surfaces beneath roof eaves are altered to create areas of permeability and direct surface flow of rainwater into vegetated or mulched areas or retention/detention devices.
3. Drains carrying roof runoff or surface drain runoff from back yards or areas not visible to the street are EITHER
 - A. Directed into rainbarrels or cisterns at the downspouts to slow and reduce the flow of water into the drainage system, OR
 - B. Disconnected from their overflow to the street and re-directed into a vegetated or mulched area.

Sponge Gardens

1. The visible garden area has been designed to capture as much of the rainfall from rooftops and other impermeable surfaces as possible.
2. The flat areas on the property have been replaced with high and low contoured areas ("graded retention areas") to prevent rainfall from "sheeting" across the garden and off the property - helping to retain the first 1" of rainwater after a dry spell: AND/OR
3. A dry creek bed or vegetated swale ("bioswale") captures the majority of the surface flow of downspout water and water from adjacent hard surfaces, creating sufficient area to slow, spread and sink it.
 - A. Dry creek beds or vegetated swales are designed to hold at least 1" of rain from roof and adjacent hard surfaces, AND
 - B. Rainfall in excess of 1" or the water-holding capacity of the garden, whichever is greater, is safely directed off-site after having been run through vegetated areas, including bioswales and creek beds, to remove pollutants and retain sediment.
4. At least one tree or very large shrub has been planted at its proper distance from hard surfaces and buildings to help naturally store water for the entire garden.

Retention Devices

1. Rainbarrels or above-ground cisterns are visible and are
 - A. Installed properly in accordance with any prevailing local building standards or codes,
 - B. Secured for safety purposes, and
 - C. Overflow into vegetated or mulched areas, AND/OR
 2. Below surface retention areas and devices such as dry wells or cisterns are utilized to do the same.
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Maintenance Details

1. Valve assemblies are installed properly and in permeable areas (preferably surrounded by mulch or gravel).
2. Irrigation shut-off valves are easily identified.
3. Separate irrigation valves are utilized for each hydrozone (see "hydrozone" description in 4a below).
4. Back-flow prevention and pressure regulation is visible in or at the valve assembly.

Irrigation Details

1. Spray irrigation is matched precipitation, "multi-stream, multi-trajectory."
2. Spray irrigation requires anti-drain check valves to prevent low head drainage.
3. Spray irrigation heads of any kind are installed at least 24 inches from hard surfaces and buildings.